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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001355

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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [KACT](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH OFFICIALS REPEAT DISARMAMENT CONCERNS

REF: A. PARIS 1039

[1](#)B. PARIS POINTS FOR 10/2/2009

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathy Allegrone, Reasons 1.  
4(b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: French officials, including senior presidency staff, have once again stressed their concern that U.S. disarmament policy might lead to political pressure on France to make further cuts to its own nuclear arsenal, pressure France would resist. Nevertheless, the GOF says it wants to ensure any disagreements with the United States over disarmament not prevent cooperation towards achieving concrete progress on nonproliferation issues leading up to and at the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Elysee (presidency) Strategic Advisor Francois Richier told Pol M/C on October 1 that U.S.-French differences on disarmament are "psychological," and that, while France supports the United States reducing its nuclear arsenal, it must not try to impose a "demonization" of nuclear weapons or reduce their role in military strategy. Repeating an argument the French have used before (ref A) Richier said the nuclear deterrent is part of France's identity, adding that France's conventional capabilities are not as strong as those of the United States. While France welcomes extended deterrence and NATO guarantees, the GOF will continue to rely on its own arsenal. Therefore, France would reject any suggestion that it join in multilateral nuclear arms reduction talks ("if you ask us, we will just say 'No!'"). According to Richier, this will remain a redline for France even if the United States eventually reduces its own arsenal to a size closer to France's, since the GOF bases the size of its deterrent on its evaluation of potential threats, not on the size of another country's arsenal, especially that of the U.S., which is not a security threat to France in any case.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Richier said France is, however, looking forward to talking about multilateral disarmament measures other than arms reduction, such as dismantling testing sites or transforming nuclear material to make it suitable for civilian use. France also supports a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), though not one that addresses stockpiles. Richier also cautioned about spending too much time creating a comprehensive verification regime for an FMCT, saying that it would be better to set up a flexible verification system quickly to get a treaty signed without undue delay, since France's main strategic goal with an FMCT is to stop China from producing fissile materials.

[1](#)4. (C/NF) Earlier the same day, the same message was previewed by MFA NPT officer Celine Jurgensen (ref B), who, along with Richier, will attend upcoming P3 consultations on the margins of the CSIS conference in Washington on October [1](#)9. Jurgensen said that, despite some disagreements during

the negotiation process, France was quite happy with the resolution adopted at the September 24 UN Security Council Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation Summit, chaired by President Obama. She added that, although France would have ideally preferred the resolution to mention Iran and North Korea by name, the text was an excellent model for a potential product for the 2010 NPT RevCon. Jurgensen also warned against any suggestion that post-START negotiations be broadened to include other nuclear powers, saying France would simply not disarm further in the foreseeable future. She added that she did not think arguments trying to leverage current U.S. and Russian disarmament efforts to gain concessions on nonproliferation from other countries would work. Like Richier, however, she added that ongoing P3 consultations were useful and that France and the United States clearly shared goals on nonproliferation issues. Jurgensen said that P3 consultations should focus on creating an effective outreach strategy focused on both Non-Aligned Movement states as well as European nations like Sweden that might be willing to support watered down nonproliferation language at the 2010 NPT RevCon.

¶5. (C/NF) SUMMARY: The message that France is not willing to further reduce its nuclear arsenal is not new, though French officials seem to be making it ever more pointedly. There is a clear will to work with the United States (and the UK) to advance shared nonproliferation goals at the 2010 RevCon and in other fora, but as consultations continue the GOF seems to be growing more worried about perceived differences in our disarmament policies. Clearly laying out our own redlines may either ease French concerns about the extent of these differences - thus limiting the danger of French obstructionism - or at least encourage the French to focus

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less on their fears of calls for arms reductions and more on areas, including on disarmament, where cooperation with its P3 partners may be more fruitful. END SUMMARY.  
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